بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

The deliverance of the Children of Israel from Pharaoh

Subject: Trust in Allah

وَ اَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰۤى اَنْ اَسْرِ بِعِبَادِيْۤ اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿52﴾ فَاَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَآئِنِ حٰشِرِيْنَ ﴿53﴾ اِنَّ هٰۤؤُلَآءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ
قَلِيْلُوْنَ ﴿54﴾ وَ اِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَآئِظُوْنَ ﴿55﴾ وَ اِنَّا لَجَمِيْعٌ حٰذِرُوْنَ ﴿56﴾ فَاَخْرَجْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿57﴾ وَّ كُنُوْزٍ وَّ
مَقَامٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿58﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ؕ وَ اَوْرَثْنٰهَا بَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ﴿59﴾ فَاَتْبَعُوْهُمْ مُّشْرِقِيْنَ ﴿60﴾ فَلَمَّا تَرَآءَ الْجَمْعٰنِ قَالَ اَصْحٰبُ
مُوْسٰۤى اِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُوْنَ ﴿61﴾ قَالَ كَلَّا ۚ اِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّيْ سَيَهْدِيْنِ ﴿62﴾ فَاَوْحَيْنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوْسٰۤى اَنِ اضْرِبْ بِّعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ ؕ فَانْفَلَقَ
فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿63﴾ وَ اَزْلَفْنَا ثَمَّ الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿64﴾ وَ اَنْجَيْنَا مُوْسٰى وَ مَنْ مَّعَهٗۤ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿65﴾ ثُمَّ اَغْرَقْنَا
الْاٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿66﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً ؕ وَ مَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿67﴾ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿68﴾

Translation

We revealed to Moses: "Set forth with My servants by night for you will be pursued." (52) Then Pharaoh sent heralds to the cities (to mobilize troops) (53) saying: "These (Israelites) are only a small band of people (54) who have certainly provoked our wrath. (55) But we are a numerous host, ever on guard." (56) Thus did We drive them out of their gardens and springs (57) and their treasures and excellent dwellings. (58) This happened with them; (but on the other hand), We enabled the Children of Israel to inherit those bounties. (59) At sunrise they set off in pursuit of them (60) and when the groups came face to face, the companions of Moses cried out: "We are overtaken!" (61) Moses said: "Certainly not. My Lord is with me; He will direct me." (62) Then We revealed to Moses, (commanding him): "Strike the sea with your rod." Thereupon the sea split up, and then each became like the mass of a huge mount. (63) We also brought the other party close to the same spot, (64) and We delivered Moses and his companions, all of them, (65) then We drowned the others. (66) Surely there is a Sign in this, but most of them would not believe. (67) Verily your Lord is Immensely Mighty, Ever Compassionate. (68)

(Tafheemul Quran, Surah Ash-Shu'ara, Ch: 26, Ruku: 4, Verses: 52 to 68)

Commentary

We revealed to Moses:[41] "Set forth with My servants by night for you will be pursued."[42] (52)

41. The mention of migration here does not mean that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the Israelites were immediately ordered to leave Egypt. The history of the intervening period has been related in (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 127-135) and (Surah Yunus, Ayats 83-89), and a part of it has been mentioned in (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 23-46)and (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 46-56). Here the story is being cut short and only the final phase of the conflict between Pharaoh and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is given to show the tragic end of Pharaoh who had remained obdurate even after witnessing clear signs and the ultimate success of Moses (peace be upon him) who had divine support behind his message.

42. The warning that "you will be pursued" shows the wisdom of the instruction to set off during the night. The idea was that before Pharaoh came out with his hosts to pursue them, they should have gone far enough so as to be out of reach of him. It should be borne in mind that the Israelites were not settled in one place in Egypt but were scattered in cities and habitations all over the country and lived in large numbers especially in the land between Memphis and Rameses called Goshen. It appears that when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was commanded to leave Egypt, he must have sent instructions to the Israelite habitations telling the people to make necessary preparations for migration and he must have also fixed a night for them to leave their homes for the exodus.

Then Pharaoh sent heralds to the cities (to mobilize troops) (53) saying: "These (Israelites) are only a small band of people (54) who have certainly provoked our wrath. (55) But we are a numerous host, ever on on guard."[43] (56)

43. All this shows that Pharaoh in fact was terror-stricken, but was trying to hide his fear under cover of fearlessness. On the one hand, he was mobilizing forces to face the situation; and on the other hand, he wanted to show that he was undaunted and undeterred, for a despotic ruler like Pharaoh could have no danger from a suppressed and slave community which had been living in disgrace for centuries. That is why his heralds made the people believe that the Israelites were just a handful of people, who could do them no harm, but had to be punished for the provocation they had caused. As for mobilization it was only a precautionary measure which had been taken to meet any eventuality in time.

Thus did We drive them out of their gardens and springs (57) and their treasures and excellent dwellings. [44] (58)

44. The general mobilization ordered by Pharaoh was aimed to crush the Israelites completely, but God's device turned the tables on him and drew out all his chiefs and courtiers from their dwelling places and drove them to the place where they and their hosts were to be drowned all together. Had they not pursued the Israelites, nothing would have happened save that a community would have left the country quietly and they would have continued to enjoy life in their fine dwellings as before. But they in fact had cleverly planned not to allow the Israelites go away peacefully, but to attack the migrating caravans suddenly to finish them completely. For this very purpose the princes and the high chiefs and the nobles came out of their palaces and joined Pharaoh in the campaign, but their cleverness did not avail them anything. Not only did the Israelites succeed in escaping from Egypt, but also at the same time the elite of Pharaoh's tyrannical kingdom perished in the sea.

This happened with them; (but on the other hand), We enabled the Children of Israel to inherit those bounties.[45] (59)

45. Some commentators have interpreted this verse to mean that Allah made the Children of Israel to inherit the gardens, water-springs, treasure-houses and fine dwellings vacated and left behind by Pharaoh and his people. This would inevitably mean that after the drowning of Pharaoh, the Israelites returned to Egypt and took possession of the wealth and properties of Pharaoh's people. This interpretation, however, is neither supported by history nor by other verses of the Quran. The relevant verses of Surahs Al-Baqarah, Al-Maidah, Al-Aaraf and TaHa confirm that after the destruction of Pharaoh in the sea, the Israelites did not return to Egypt but proceeded towards their destination (Palestine) and then, till the time of Prophet David (973-1013 B.C.) all the major events of their history took place in the lands which are now known as the Sinai Peninsula, northern Arabia, Transjordan and Palestine. As such, in our opinion the verses mean this: On the one hand, Allah deprived the people of Pharaoh of their wealth, possessions and grandeur, and on the other hand, He bestowed the same on the Children of Israel in Palestine, and not in Egypt. This same meaning is borne out by(verses 136-137 of Surah A1-Aaraf): Then We took Our vengeance on them and drowned them in the sea because they had treated Our signs as false and grown heedless of them. And after them We gave as heritage to those who had been abased and kept low, the eastern and the western parts of that land, which had been blessed bountifully by Us. The epithet of the blessed land has generally been used for Palestine in the Quran as in (Surah Bani Israil, Ayat 1); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 71-81); and (Surah Saba, Ayat 18).

At sunrise they set off in pursuit of them (60) and when the groups came face to face, the companions of Moses cried out: "We are overtaken!" (61) Moses said: "Certainly not. My Lord is with me; He will direct me." [46] (62)

46. That is, He will show me the way out of this calamity

Then We revealed to Moses, (commanding him): "Strike the sea with your rod." Thereupon the sea split up, and then each became like the mass of a huge mout.[47] (63)

47. Literally, tawd is a high mountain. It appears that as soon as Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) struck the sea with his staff, it tore the sea asunder and the waters stood like two mighty mountains on the sides and remained in that condition for so long that, on the one hand, the Israelite caravans consisting of hundreds of thousands of the migrants were able to pass through safely, and on the other, Pharaoh and his hosts stepped in and reached the middle of the sea. In the natural course, a phenomenon like this has never occurred that due to a windstorm, however strong, the sea should have parted and stood like mighty mountains on either side for such a long time. According to (verse 77 of Surah Ta Ha), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was commanded by Allah to make for them (the Israelites) a dry path across the sea. This shows that the smiting of the sea did not only result in dividing the waters into two parts, which stood like mighty mountains on either side, but it also created a dry path in between without any mud or slush. In this connection, one should also consider (verse 24 of Surah Dukhan), which says that after Moses (peace be upon him) had crossed the sea along with his people, he was commanded by Allah to let the sea remain as it is because Pharaoh is to be drowned in it. This implies that if after crossing the sea, Moses had again struck it with his staff, the two sides would have rejoined, but he was forbidden to do so. Obviously, this was a miracle, and the view of those who try to interpret it as a natural phenomenon, is belied. For explanation, see (E.N. 53 of Surah Ta Ha).

We also brought the other party close to the same spot, (64) and We delivered Moses and his companions, all of them, (65) then We drowned the others.[48] (66)

48. That is, Pharaoh and his army.

Surely there is a Sign in this,[49] but most of them would not believe. (67)

49. That is, the Quraish have this lesson to learn from this: The obdurate people like Pharaoh, his chiefs and followers had not believed even though they had been shown clear miracles for years. They had been so blinded by obduracy that even on the occasion of their drowning in the sea although they had seen the sea parting asunder in front of their very eyes, the waters standing like high mountains on either side, and the dry path in between for the Israelite caravans to pass, yet they failed to understand that Moses(peace be upon him) had divine succor and support with him which they had come out to fight. At last when they came to their senses, it was too late, because they had been overtaken by the wrath of Allah and the sea waters had covered them completely. It was on this occasion that Pharaoh had cried out: I have believed that there is no god but the real God in Whom the Children of Israel have believed and I am of those who surrender. (Surah Yunus, Ayat 90). On the other hand, there is a sign in this for the believers, too. They should understand how Allah by His grace causes the truth to prevail in the long run and the falsehood to vanish even though the forces to evil may appear to be dominant for the time being .

اور حقیقت یہ ہےکہ تیرا ربّ زبر دست بھی ہے اور رحیم بھی۔68